



Capitol Update 2-22-19

As things have been so busy in Austin these past two week, our Capitol Update has much to share. Let's dive right in.

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development

As I've said in previous updates, I am honored that Lt. Governor Patrick appointed me to serve as Chairman of the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee. The Committee meets once per week during the regular legislative session to review legislation relevant to oil and gas, environmental permitting and quality, workforce development, labor, and tools and programs authorized by the legislature to encourage economic development at the state and local level. On Wednesday, I chaired my first hearing this Session. This was the committee's organizational hearing where we heard from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the Rail Road Commission (RRC), and Texas Workforce Commission (TWC); all of which fall under the purview of the committee. In the next few weeks, the committee will begin to hear legislation as bills continued to get referred.



Chairing my first Natrual Resources and Economic Development committee hearing for the session on 2/20/19.

Senate Bill 915 - Bond Transparency Legislation Filed

This week I filed SB 915, which requires local taxing entities to write bond proposals in a manner that allows voters to approve each issue individually as separate ballot items. Cities, counties, and school districts are requiring taxpayers to vote on substantial bond packages, some approaching a billion dollars. These enormous bond packages affect multiple projects including Affordable Housing, Libraries, Transportation, Parks & Recreation, School District facilities, etc. Voters are expected to either approve or deny the bond in its entirety, as opposed to accepting or denying individual projects. This change will allow taxpayers to express their approval for certain portions of the plan while still preserving the ability to oppose portions they don't support.

Newly Authored Legislation

As we approach the March 8th bill-filing deadline, my team and I are still working on some final pieces of important legislation. Here are a few examples of bills I filed in the past two weeks:

- SB 972 - During the 85th session, SB 2118 was passed allowing the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to authorize certain public junior colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees in applied science, applied technology, and nursing. While this legislation helped expand access to higher education it arbitrarily left out smaller junior colleges and the students which they serve. This bill will grant all public junior colleges the same ability to apply for such authority, while keeping the Texas Higher Educating Coordinating Board as the approving accrediting body.
- SB 973 - This bill would give authority to police department heads to show body camera footage to a family member without concern that it must then automatically be released to the public. This legislation could encourage open dialogue between law enforcement agencies and the families and potentially prevent harm in Texas communities.
- Senate Bill 1009 - This bill protects magistrates from suit in instances where performing marriage ceremonies might violate a sincerely-held religious belief.

City of Waco and Texas Department of Transportation Meeting

Last Thursday, Representative Doc Anderson, Representative Kyle Kacal, and I hosted Chairman Bugg of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) along with his team and Mayor Deaver and other Waco leaders in Austin to discuss the I-35 expansion project in Waco and its impact on the community. The section of I-35 from the North Loop 340 to 12th Street will begin construction in March as planned. Additionally, during our meeting we addressed recently raised concerns regarding any potential flooding that may arise from the project's construction and how to mitigate that possibility. Engineers from TxDOT as well as local engineers in Waco will continue to study models and designs to find the best possible solution to move the project forward. My office is diligently tracking the progress of the I-35 expansion in Waco and will remain vigilant in providing resources and information to my constituents living in the greater Waco area.



Capitol Visits from SD-22

In just the past week alone, my team and I have enjoyed the honor of welcoming numerous constituents and elected officials from Senate District 22 at the Capitol! Citizens from Arlington, Waco, Cleburne, Midlothian, Joshua, Hill County and Hood County have made the trek to Austin to learn about the legislative process and voice their questions and concerns about Texas public policy. It is always my pleasure to see them and answer their thoughtful questions about the work of the Legislature, and to visit about the direct impact our work will have on them, the citizens we serve. My staff has been busy meeting with constituents and various interest groups to gain all the needed information for me to make an educated vote on each and every bill on which I may have the opportunity to vote. In just this week alone, my team has been meeting with groups like the Texas Association of Manufacturers, the The March of Dimes, Justices of the Peace and Constables Association, the Texas Chemical Council, Trustees and Superintendents from across the district, and many more engaging groups of individuals. We appreciate your visits to the office and the valuable information you share.



Meeting with Ellen Bauman from Joshua, TX.



Pictured with Dr. Joe Martin and Dr. Heath Bullard of Cleburne, TX



Citizens from Hood County visiting the Capitol to discuss legislative issues with myself and State Representative Mike Lang (R-Granbury) on "Hood County Day."

Thanks for reading, and God bless,

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